

Natural/Cultural Resources and Open Space

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Pioneers began settling the land that was to become Catawba County within decades after Adam Sherrill crossed the Catawba River in the 1740s. According to reports Governor William Tryon sent back to London, between 400 and 500 families had settled west of the river by the 1770s. Settlement continued throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, with rural living and farming predominating into the first decades of the 20th century.

Today, the Hwy. 16 South Corridor study area reflects the largely agricultural heritage of the community. Residents still strive to protect open space, and identify the natural wooded beauty of Anderson Mountain as a valued community landmark.



Anderson Mountain

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Several minor creeks and small ponds traverse the study area. The major land feature within the study area is Anderson Mountain, the second highest ridge in Catawba County at 1,562 feet (behind Bakers Mountain at 1,780 feet). Development on Anderson Mountain consisted of communication towers and manufactured homes, and later, a new single-family residential development which began encroaching at the base of the mountain. Citizen's desire to protect the visual aesthetics of the landmark, resulted in the formation of the Mountain Protection Overlay District (MP-O) and the adoption of a Wireless Communication Ordinance.

The boundaries of the MP-O are defined as the land area above the 1,100-foot contour on Anderson Mountain, as

identified on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Topographic maps. To minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive areas, the average density allowed in the MP-O is one unit per two acres. Building height is limited to 30 feet, with structures designed to conform to and be built into the natural terrain, and not be located at the crest of a ridge. Natural building materials and colors should be used which blend into the wooded environment. Disturbance of natural vegetation around building footprints is generally limited to 30 feet.

The Wireless Communications Ordinance was created to encourage the construction of communication towers necessary to supply wireless coverage, but to construct and locate them in a manner that minimize adverse aesthetic effects. Along with addressing safety concerns, the Ordinance requires new towers have the structural integrity to support at least six provider collocation arrays, thereby reducing the number of towers that are needed. Providers must also locate on existing towers, if proper coverage can be obtained. Towers over 120 feet in height or placement at the top of the ridge, is prohibited if locating lower will provide necessary coverage. Towers with no active telecommunications service providers for a period of five years are considered abandoned, and must be removed. New guyed towers are prohibited as birds tend to fatally fly into the guy wires during migration.

To protect water quality, the State of North Carolina enacted the Water Supply Watershed Protection Program in 1989. The program requires all local governments with land use planning jurisdiction in designated watersheds to administer a Water Supply Watershed Protection Ordinance to protect surface drinking water.

The majority of the study area is located in the WS-IV Protected Watershed Area (4,287 acres) which allows for 15,000 square-foot lots when curb and gutter is not used, and public water or sewer service are provided. When no public utilities (water and sewer) or curb and gutter are installed, lots cannot be smaller than one-half acre. Multi-family and non-residential uses, where permitted, are limited to 24% impervious coverage of the lot with curb and gutter and 36% without curb and gutter. Within the Protected Area, planned developments may use the high-density option of 70% impervious coverage with stormwater controls. *See Map 10: Natural Resources.*

OPEN SPACE

Besides protected watersheds and scenic wooded areas of Anderson Mountain, another significant natural feature is the rural, undeveloped land that still remains throughout the corridor. Considerable acreage simply remains as undeveloped woodland and open fields. In order to help preserve these agricultural and forest lands, the County developed a Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) program in 2008. The program allows landowners to voluntarily enter their property into an agricultural district which recognizes the property as farmland and commits the landowner to retain the property as active agricultural land. In exchange, signs are located on the farmland which identifies the property as an agricultural district and notice is provided through the County's land records system (GIS) which identifies the approved districts and land in proximity to the districts. At the present time, there are not any parcels enlisted in the VAD program; however, 1,526 acres in the corridor could qualify for the agricultural district program since they are in the County's present use tax value program (one of the qualifications for the VAD program).

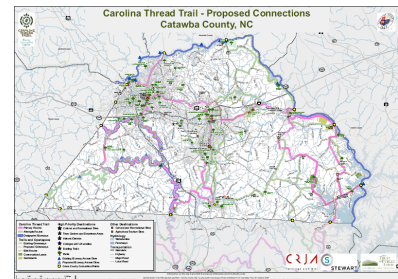


Farm in Voluntary Agricultural District

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The County is currently in the process of obtaining and developing Mountain Creek Regional Park which is located within proximity to the study area. The park site is the last undeveloped large tract on Lake Norman, covering approximately 600 acres. This regional passive park will serve all Catawba County residents, but particularly those in the southeastern area of the County and people in this study area. When developed, the park will offer educational programming to people of all ages, promote wellness through hiking, biking, and fishing opportunities and preserve the natural habitat of the area.

Linking to Mt. Creek park is the proposed Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) greenway network. The proposed trail generally runs north/south through the study area (See the Transportation - Pedestrian and Bicycle System section).



Carolina Thread Trail Map

CULTURAL RESOURCES

There are no properties in the study area which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principals were carried forward from the adopted/accepted Sherrills Ford and Balls Creek Small Area Plans and serve as a foundation for the goals and Plan Action Strategies (PASs).

- NP-1 Preserve ample open space for future generations.
- NP-2 Maintain the rural character of the region and protect scenic views and wildlife corridors.
- NP-3 Assist farmers/property owners desiring to maintain the agricultural or open space use of their property.
- NP-4 Provide adequate recreational opportunities for all segments of the population.
- NP-5 Encourage innovative ideas to create new recreational opportunities.

PLAN GOALS

- NG-1 Expand the Voluntary Agricultural District program within the Plan area.
- NG-2 Promote the attributes of the Carolina Thread Trail through outreach and education to residents concerning the development of the Carolina Thread Trail.
- NG-3 Encourage conservation easements on Anderson Mountain.
- NG-4 Promote the benefits of including qualified properties in the National Historic Register.
- NG-5 Conduct an assessment to determine the viability of consolidating wireless communication facilities and removing unnecessary tower structures on Anderson Mountain.

